

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW: GENE SAUERS
June 24, 2016



MODERATOR: Well, Gene, great start, 9-under 63, no bogeys. Maybe just some thoughts on your round and then we'll get your card and go through your card and get some questions.

GENE SAUERS: Okay. Well, I guess I'll start with back a couple weeks ago when I had to withdraw from Philadelphia, I got a bulging disc in 4-5 here so I had to withdraw, couldn't hit a 6-iron a hundred yards, can't hit, I don't know.

MODERATOR: Now, there --

GENE SAUERS: So I had to withdraw from that tournament and I had to go home, see my doctor, and I didn't play for like seven, eight days. Of course we had the week off prior, which was great, which helped me. And saw my teacher at home, he got me kind of straightened out, and coming here this week I had a lot of good -- there it goes -- I had a lot of good thoughts coming into this week. And I started swinging better and likely this neck held today, I know it kind of held me the last three holes. Hopefully I can make it the next few more days. But I hit the ball great, hit a lot of fairways, hit a lot of greens and when I had the opportunity I made most of my putts and made some long ones too.

MODERATOR: Maybe if you can remember in the card, you started 10.

SPEAKER: Started on 10, so No. 11, the par 5, I hit it left of the green and didn't hit a very good chip shot. I was probably over 30 feet and made it, that started it. And then what was the next one, the one up the hill?

MODERATOR: 13 and 14.

GENE SAUERS: I hit my gap wedge in there probably three feet. Next one I didn't birdie. Next one was a par 5, so I hit a hybrid, went left, got a good kick and rolled down to the right a little bit. So I hit hybrid on the green, just way left and the pin was in the back right. Hit a good chip shot in there about six feet, five, six feet. Then made a good par putt on 17, about -- that was probably about six, seven feet there, good par putt. Then hit a close one on 18, three feet and missed it. So then on the next one was, what, 11?

MODERATOR: Two, three and four, yeah, three straight.

GENE SAUERS: Yeah, No. 2, hit a hybrid into the par 5 and that was probably about 25 feet there and left the eagle putt dead in the heart. Made birdie there, next one I hit 6-iron on the par 3 and that was probably a 25-footer, it was up the hill so it was downhill, a little swing left to right, made it. And then I hit an 8-iron on the next hole, that was probably 15 feet and made it, made a good par on the 3, hit a 4-iron just over the green and chipped it

up about six feet, made a good par putt there. Then the par 5, decent drive down there and hit a hybrid left in the rough and had like 90 yards to the pin and hit it probably -- that was about another 30-footer I made. And then that was it on my birdies. Birdied on 9, hit 3-wood in there just right at the pin in the rough and chipped it up there probably I was probably about 10 feet I guess, made it for 63, yeah. My putter helped me a lot today, which hadn't helped me, you know, in 30 years. Now it's coming around since I went left hand low. I used to putt this way, couldn't do it. So now I went left hand low and making everything now, so just hope it continues.

Q. How long ago did you make the change?

GENE SAUERS: It's been about a month now.

Q. Really?

GENE SAUERS: Yeah.

Q. At Insperity, was it?

GENE SAUERS: In Houston was the first one.

Q. Why then and how do you explain the results?

GENE SAUERS: I was putting awful and I had to do something. I have a putting green back home and my wife doesn't play that much so she goes out there with me and she's cross handed and she whips my butt on the putting green. I get so mad. So goes, Gene, you've got to change, you've got to go left hand low. So here I am, it's working.

Q. Did you do it against her yet?

GENE SAUERS: Did I do what?

MODERATOR: Have you practiced against her using the new grip?

GENE SAUERS: I'm whipping her butt now on left hand low, yeah.

Q. What were your impressions of what it would take out here today and was 9-under beyond what you thought needed to happen to lead this tournament?

GENE SAUERS: Yeah, you know, it's a great golf course, you know. Like I say the front side is kind of wide open sort of and then the back nine is tree lined so it's a good mixture and golf course is in great shape, the greens are perfect. What more can you ask for. You know, shooting 9-under is pretty good out here on this track I think. It's not a real easy golf course. So you've got to just concentrate on fairways and greens and give yourself opportunities.

Q. You guys are treating it a little rough today in terms of as a group?

GENE SAUERS: Me and John?

Q. Why do you think that is? There's a lot of red numbers, lot of low scores?

GENE SAUERS: Well, the golf course is in great shape, the greens are rolling just perfect, just whatever you see is what it does and everybody putts good out here. That's what wins golf tournaments.

Q. Do you fear that it takes two more rounds like this to win?

GENE SAUERS: No, it's not going to do that I don't think. I hope not anyway. I said early in the week somebody asked me, my pro-am partners asked me what do you think it would take and I was thinking 14, 15. So just, you know, you've just got to keep putting the hammer down, hopefully, you know. Who knows, it might get to 20, you never know, but I doubt it.

Q. It's been a while between wins?

GENE SAUERS: Yes, it has.

Q. When do you allow yourself to start thinking about that?

GENE SAUERS: That's something I've been working on, you know, psychologically, just trying to put everything out of the mind, just take one shot at a time and breathe a lot. My wife is into yoga and all that stuff. I used to do yoga, my last one I credited to doing yoga, 2002, which was the Air Canada Championship and I credited a lot to yoga, the stretching and the breathing and all that. I lost in the U.S. Open to Colin Montgomerie a few years back and my caddie used to caddie for Tom Watson a little bit and he called up Tom Watson on Saturday night, says, What does Gene need to do? He said, Tell him just to breathe, make sure he breathes three or four times a hole, just kind of relaxes you a little bit. So that's what I've been doing.

Q. Will the heat of the weekend help the disc and how did -- since you've had the injury how has it responded to different conditions?

GENE SAUERS: Yeah, I think the cold kind of hurts it more. That's what some of the doctors were saying. You know, this is a recurrent injury. I did it probably eight, ten years ago and it hadn't flared up on my since. I did a lot of rehabilitation when it happened. This whole arm went numb, I couldn't raise it. Hits that nerve because it's pushing right into your spinal cord and it was pretty bad. But then just a couple weeks ago like I said, I was telling Dave on the flight over from Des Moines to Philadelphia, I think I fell asleep back like this, you know, and I kind of felt funny, didn't think much of it. You're lifting up all the luggage and

heavy stuff we carry around. Then I think I slept on it wrong that night and woke up the next morning and it was gone. Like I said, I couldn't even hit a 6-iron a hundred yards, it was awful, a lot of pain. So I think the heat will help it a lot. That's what my doctor told me. You would think you'd put cold, ice or something, but knock the swelling down, but he wants heat on it for some reason. Totally opposite. So ain't much you can do for a disc. Hopefully it just stays, you know, because it will never go back in is what he's telling me. It's been there for ten years, it will never go back in. Only thing you can do is an operation, they cut you this way, go straight back that way and put a plate back there to take the disc out, put something else in to replace it and plate and four screws. Hopefully I won't have to do that. Yeah.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Gene.